

Senior High School

SALEM, OREGON

J. C. NELSON, PRINCIPAL EMERITUS
AND HEAD OF HISTORY DEPT.

104 E. Wilson St.

Apr. 22, 1933

My dear Mr. Salles:

My only excuse for thus venturing to address you is that my valued friend Father Francisco Rosa has suggested it. He has I think showed you a letter of mine in which I commented on the copy of "Aves de Arribação" which he had very kindly sent me, so that my name is not entirely unknown to you. And now he urges me to write to you, and express my appreciation of your lovely story at first-hand. It is just one more wreath to be laid at your feet; and you must have had so many, that one more or less could concern you but little. And yet your readers in the United States must have been very few; unfortunately we do not take time to learn Portuguese; so it may be that I am your sole reader among our English-speaking population.

My knowledge of Brazilian literature was so scanty that I had never heard of the book before Father Rosa sent it to me; consider then what must have been my amazement and delight when I realized what a masterpiece I had before me!

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies

When a new planet swims into his ken".

The keen psychological insight, the masterly development of the plot, the skillful picture of the village life, the nobility of thought, and the splendid cadences of your sonorous prose, all combined to produce a most powerful and lasting impression. Here at last was Portuguese written as it should be written, in that tone of "classic solemnity" which must be maintained if the language is to reach its full perfection. These younger writers who try to be "smart" and flippant, are simply wasting their patrimony; Portuguese retains too much of its Latin origin ever to lend itself to such specious experiments. There is perhaps only one other story in Brazilian literature that can bear comparison with yours-Taunay's "Innocencia"; and outside of the realm of fiction, perhaps only Euclides da Cunha's "Os Sertões" belongs in the same class. But your true literary ancestor is Eça de Queiroz; you have conferred upon Brazilian literature the same imperishable glory that he has reflected upon that of Portugal.

It would interest me very deeply to know what was the community that you took as your model; for we are to understand that "Ipuçaba" is a fictitious name, are we not? The thoroughness with which you analyze all the elements of life in this town suggests Balzac; but you have more dignity than Balzac. And in your conclusion you rise to a height that has never been surpassed this side of Camões, and a magnificent confirmation of those words of Coelho Netto: "selva selvagem, hispida, frondosa, mais terrível na sua grandeza do que a brenha escura e húmida da Alemanha, que Tacito descreveu em estylo forte....selva que freme e galreia, que retumba e canta, que envenena e reanima, misteriosa, formossíssima e aterradora selva, assim és tu para o mundo, encantadora lingua portuguesa".

Permit me then to lay my homage at your feet, to acclaim you as one of the great masters of your language and race, and accept from the lips

of a stranger and a foreigner some part of the devotion that you have so richly earned! With deepest regard, permit me to sign myself

Your sincere admirer,

J. C. Nelson

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